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## CCU takes care on the road

By Jeff Troth, MEDDAC PAO



Keeping things the same can be safe and easy, but sometimes changing things up can reap big benefits. That is what the Critical Care Unit found out when they held their biannual Soldier Readiness Review Dec. 3 to 5 in Utah instead of Colorado.

"This is our third SSR since we stood the CCU up last fall," said Capt. Jennae Pitts, CCU commander. "We had the first two here because the majority of our Soldiers were in Colorado, but that has changed and now 10 of my 23 Soldiers live in Utah.

"We chose the National Ability Center, located about 20 minutes outside of Salt Lake City because what we do for Soldiers at the CCU is mirrored by the NAC, so having our review there just made sense."

"The National Ability Center focuses on what abilities a person can do, and not what their disability is," said Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Cole, the senior enlisted advisor for the Warrior Transition Battalion, the CCU's higher headquarters. "And that is what we do at the WTB; show Soldiers that they still have options open to them."

The WTB's mission is to take care of wounded, ill and injured Soldiers who require at least six months of rehabilitative care and complex medical management. Soldiers of the CCU are assigned to Fort Carson, but live and receive treatment in their hometowns, which are in six states – Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming.

Since the CCU Soldiers are located so far away, communication with them is normally conducted by phone or email. The Soldier Readiness Review allows the unit cadre and Soldiers to come together in one location to review care plans, fulfill mandatory Army training and show the Soldiers activities they can do regardless of their physical ability.

Having the SRR in Utah not only helped the Soldiers out, but also the cadre who planned the event.

"When we have an SRR here at Fort Carson we have to contact each organization individually and see when their services – equine, archery, and bowling – are available. Then we have to work out our schedule off their

availability,” said Cole. “With the NAC we told them what we wanted to do and they arranged everything.”

Besides doing mandatory training requirements such as equal opportunity and sexual harassment classes, the Soldiers also participated in some of the many programs that the NAC offered. These included archery, rock climbing, sled hockey, equine therapy and nutrition classes.

“The NAC provided activities all within their area so we didn’t have to worry about the logistics of getting people from one place to the next,” said Cole. “And we were able to use their state of the art equipment which I don’t think any WTB or WTU (Warrior Transition Unit) in the Army has.”

Besides all the activities being in the same location, Cole said, a big bonus of being at the NAC was that everyone stayed under the same roof, compared to them being at several hotels when the review is held at Fort Carson.

“This allowed for some great team building at night since there were no TVs or internet in the rooms,” said Cole. “Instead of being by themselves in their room, they came together in the lodge’s common areas and were able to spend time with other Soldiers that are in similar situations.”

Besides learning from their peers, the CCU Soldiers also learned about resources in their own community.

“My Soldiers had their eyes open about what is available to them,” said Pitts. “Some of them have tunnel vision and think that only active duty can help active duty Soldiers and National Guard can only help Guardsmen. But that isn’t true.”

Employees of the Dugway Proving Ground education office talked to the Soldiers and their families about education benefits that were available to them and offered their assistance on writing resumes.

“The key point of our time at the National Ability Center is that you don’t have to be on an Army base to receive the help you need,” said Cole. “The purpose of the CCU is to help Soldiers utilize the resources in their area in order to speed up their recovery and move on with their life.”



Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Miller, Utah National Guard, talks to CCU Soldiers during the Soldier Readiness Review command session. (Photo courtesy of Utah National Guard)